

E
221
-W29
THE

DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

AN ADDRESS

BY

WINSLOW WARREN.

PRESIDENT OF THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT ASSOCIATION.

JUNE 17, 1904.

BOSTON: JUNE, 1904.





Class E221

Book W29

PRESENTED BY



THE
DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE.

A N A D D R E S S

BY

WINSLOW WARREN,

PRESIDENT OF THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT ASSOCIATION.

JUNE 17, 1904.

BOSTON : JUNE, 1904.

Gift.

Source unknown

30 D 04

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN OF THE BUNKER HILL MONUMENT ASSOCIATION:

It is a matter of regret to me that other engagements have compelled my absence from your meetings the two years past, but your printed proceedings upon those occasions were full of interest and contributed material of importance to the student of Revolutionary literature.

The Treasurer's Report shows that the financial condition of the Association is good, although the erection of the new Lodge increases the expenses in much the same proportion that it adds to the comfort of visitors. The most pressing need of the Association is that of a larger permanent fund to improve the grounds and keep the buildings in proper and attractive condition.

During the year ten members of our Association have passed away, and one of our Directors, Mr. Richard Devens. They were earnest, active citizens, proud of their heritage, and in their respective fields of work added to the well-being and moral strength of this community. We shall miss them from our membership, but to those who take their places we extend a cordial welcome, confident that the patriotic memories clustering round the 17th of June will inspire them to follow closely in the footsteps of their predecessors.

The year's panorama has unfolded a varied picture, with incidents both of encouragement and of warning. While it has not been a year of marked prosperity, and while accidents by flood and fire have caused terrible losses and suffering,

our country has pursued a peaceful and progressive course, and no complications of a dangerous nature have actively threatened. The settlement by arbitration of the Alaskan Question and the Venezuelan troubles is a matter for congratulation, irrespective of the terms of settlement. The assurance of the building of the Panama Canal is of the first importance, not only because it closes a vexed question, but for its effect in changing and opening up new avenues of trade and in knitting together different parts of this Union of States. The final step in its accomplishment will probably always be subject to criticism and discussion, but rightful authority having settled the fact that the Canal is to be built, no one will question its desirability and usefulness.

The most perplexing problems before the country are, as they have long been, those connected with the continual strife between capital and labor, and it is singular and not altogether encouraging that such conditions should exist and seemingly grow worse in a country affording boundless opportunity for both laboring man and capitalist and where the chances for progress and improvement are so great. One would think that here, if anywhere, justification was wanting for class feeling, for jealousies, or for violent breach of the laws.

The constant succession of strikes retards progress, imperils business interests, and brings suffering and disaster to those concerned and to parties having no immediate connections with the strife. The growing strength of the labor unions would not be a subject of regret was it not too often accompanied by a dictatorial and narrow spirit infringing upon the rights of the individual man and frequently leading to public disorder and violation of law. As an educating force to its members the Union is of value, and equally so as a protection for the just rights of labor, but its members should never forget that the public peace must be preserved

at all hazards, that no grievances can be enforced by violence, and that the rights of non-union men are just as sacred and inviolate as those of men who band themselves together for a common purpose. Liberty is a myth, and despotism usurps its place, unless the individual man may use his own judgment and work where and when he pleases for what he deems sufficient wage without violent interference by others; he may be persuaded, he may be influenced, but no man or body of men have the right to use force. Despotism is despotism, whether under forms of labor unions or capitalistic combinations, and a trust in labor may be just as oppressive and dangerous as a trust to restrict production, affect prices, or for any other purpose, even more so in its tendency to lead to open violence.

The great public having no connection with particular combinations must always be considered, and it will not patiently submit to interruption of public traffic or to the lessening of its comforts or conveniences while jarring interests are settling their private quarrels. Public legislation should be impartial in the sense that it should be directed towards bettering conditions and repairing injustice to all classes of people, but none should be enacted except with the understanding that peace is always to be preserved and that the wrongs of special parties shall not be redressed at the expense of the rights of the community as a whole.

Outside of our country it is not a cheering prospect that, despite Hague Conferences and all efforts to promote peace between nations, the opening years of this Twentieth Century witness a disastrous and bloody war between great empires of the West and East, and upon questions that seem to involve little else than extensions of territory at the expense of other nations. However sympathies may be divided between the two contending parties, we must all hope that the war may not be of long duration, and that the awful waste, sacrifice, and

slaughter may tend to discourage such barbarous methods and to spread the principles of peaceful arbitration.

The military spirit prevailing everywhere, even in our own country, and the apotheosis of force, requiring such enormous military and naval appropriations, give food for thought, and in this connection we may well consider whether the alarming increase of crime, the lynchings at the South and West, and the disregard of law in many high quarters, are not the natural result of such a spirit. The Devil's advocates are uncommonly busy, and if Christian preachers believe in the Gospel of Peace, they have a wide field for Christian work. He who talks of war as anything but a curse to a nation and a crime against humanity should remember these words of General Sherman, who knew what war was: "I confess without shame that I am tired and sick of the war. Its glory is all moonshine. Even success, the most brilliant, is over dead and mangled bodies, the anguish and lamentation of distant families appealing to me for missing sons, husbands, and fathers. It is only those who have not heard a shot, nor heard the shrieks and groans of the wounded and lacerated (friend or foe), that cry aloud for more blood, more vengeance, more desolation."

The Peace Conference, to be held in Boston in the Fall, is a hopeful sign; for this Republic above all others should stand for peace, and this Association and all patriotic societies which venerate the Founders of this Republic and believe that the principles they advocated lead to peace and amity between nations can contribute to the hastening of the time when armaments shall be reduced and the reign of peace in the world be brought nearer.

To that end, in the short space of time allotted me to-day, I desire to call your attention to what our Fathers believed as illustrated by their own words, and I turn back by way of text to the interview I once before referred to, which our late member Judge Chamberlain narrated that he had with

Captain Preston, who fought at Lexington, and who, when over ninety years of age, could recall no reason for going into the fight other than that America had always governed herself and always meant to.

We may seek for hidden causes of the Revolution — we may ascribe it to this or that violation of rights or liberties, but reduced to its ultimate the old soldier probably summed it up pretty much as it presented itself to the ordinary mind at the time, and expressed in a general way the feeling that actuated the masses of the revolutionists. Few had the time, the power, or the desire to reason the matter out, or to form definite ideas of what the trouble was or what they wanted.

We are all familiar with the stated causes for revolt, but they were the excitement of the moment as compared with the pride of conscious strength and the desire America had to be left alone to work out her own problems.

The special grievances, the principles in dispute brought forth the great leaders, but probably their minds were less influenced by them than they imagined, and back of all was the feeling only partially recognized that America was a nation and needed no instruction or guidance from abroad. Of course they did not say that, they were honest in the beginning in disclaiming any idea of independence; they did, with rare exceptions, honestly look forward to a reconciliation with the mother country; but all the while, though they did not see it then, the terms of reconciliation formulated in their minds were impossible of attainment in any other way than by independence.

It does not impugn their good faith or wisdom that like all great leaders of revolutions they failed to estimate the force of the current bearing them on; but it is plain to our eyes that a revolt in the name of the King against the Parliament to establish rights that King and Parliament alike desired to

withhold was a fiction which in the nature of things could only be temporary, and which the first clash of arms was certain to dissipate into thin air. Events moved too fast for men's control, and independence came because no other result than that of absolute submission was possible.

Consider for a moment how rapidly at last America drifted towards revolution and separation, and how each step forward, as usual, lopped off the hesitating and timid, and made it more and more difficult for the bolder leaders to retrace their path.

In 1761 James Otis struck the keynote in his great argument against the writs of assistance, — the general principles of independence which operated later were then so clearly enunciated that the people caught the breath of freedom, and the unrest and turmoil and frequent outbreaks during the nine years following showed that the lesson could not be unlearned.

March 5, 1770, came the Boston Massacre on State Street, the first conflict of the Revolution, in which the people were stricken down by murderous bullets; December 16, 1773, the mob openly defied British law by throwing the tea overboard in Boston Harbor; May, 1774, General Gage arrived in Boston to assume the position of Royal Governor, and was escorted from Long Wharf to the Town House in King, now State, Street by the Boston Cadets, under the command of John Hancock, probably the last act of loyalty to Great Britain by the Corps or its officers; June 1, 1774, the Port of Boston was closed by Act of Parliament; September, 1774, the Continental Congress or Conference of States gathered at Philadelphia; October 5, 1774, the Massachusetts House of Representatives met at Salem, summoned by Governor Gage, and being notified that their meeting was revoked, immediately constituted themselves a Provincial Congress, assumed administration,

and passed orders for putting the Province into a condition for defence,—the winter passed in fruitless disputes with the Governor and Royal officers, but the Congress was busy with active and positive work nearly approaching rebellion; April 19, 1775, the natural result came in the fight at Lexington and Concord, fairly opening the Revolution, and followed by the gathering of a large army of half-armed troops at Cambridge to besiege Boston, the Continental Congress finding a commander for them in the person of George Washington; May 10, 1775, Ticonderoga and Crown Point were taken by force; on June 17, 1775, before Washington had reached the army, Bunker Hill was fought; March 17, 1776, Boston was evacuated by the British, the scene of action was transferred to a larger field at New York, and then, July 4, 1776, came the time to write the Revolution into the Declaration of Independence, so that the world might behold the new nation and find also a government with a novelty, one that based itself upon certain ideal truths, and thus differentiated the American Revolution from all preceding revolutions.

However old the subject may be, and however hopeless the thought of adding anything new to the discussion, it may still be interesting to consider this extraordinary Declaration from a purely historical standpoint, and to revive our recollections of its truths, as well as to consider how far in reality they were intended to go. As no political party has any proprietorship in those truths, and no party has yet taken a position in opposition to them, we can freely discuss them in the hope of clarifying our view of the deeper meaning of the Revolution. Present conditions are not to be considered in this discussion, we are now concerned only with the question of the permanent or transitory nature of the document itself, and of its effectiveness as a rule of national conduct.

Separating from the Declaration its catalogue of specific and temporary reasons for revolt, its whole purport is to set

forth — the natural freedom and equality of all men before the law; the fundamental right of those governed to pass upon the form of government they shall live under, and to subvert it if not satisfactory: and the right of all men to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, — this last phrase seeming a broad generalization capable of wide interpretation.

No one of these doctrines was original with the signers, and the Committee reporting the Declaration made no pretence to have originated them. Every principle had been stated and advocated long before by European philosophers and writers, — and the claim has been made that the Declaration itself bore a strong resemblance to that of the United Netherlands, — but it was the first practical application of such principles to an actual system of popular government. The author of the Declaration said in later years, “I did not consider it as any part of my charge to invent new ideas altogether, and to offer no sentiment which had ever been expressed before.”

It may properly be regarded, therefore, as a crystallization of old theories, and as such its promulgation excited surprise in Europe, mingled with a good deal of skepticism as to its being a working basis for government or as to the possibility of adherence to it in practice. This feeling was a natural one, for if its doctrines were true and extended elsewhere the prospect was dark for theories of the divine right of kings, of despotic power, or even of current monarchical systems; and therein lies the very pith of the Declaration, and it was no wonder that when the seeds sown here ripened a little later in France and the bloody revolution there ended in a military despotism the prophets of evil quickly seized upon the result as a practical test and welcome proof of the absurdity of our position.

In the Orient it made no impression and in fact had no meaning, for such theories were not within the Oriental con-

ception ; nor are they now so far as they spell Republicanism.

Dr. Edward Everett Hale recently sent a letter to an United States Senator, which well represents how such doctrines impress the Oriental mind, and is worth quoting as follows :

“ When Commodore Perry opened the ports of Japan the Japanese Government had in prison a young fellow from Washington Territory who had been shipwrecked on their coast, — he was in prison only because he was a foreigner. They cross-examined him and asked him what officer in our government held higher rank than the men they knew. He said the officers of the Navy had to obey the Secretary of the Navy, and that he was under the President. They asked him who was greater than the President. This boy said that ‘ the people is greater than the Presidency,’ and in giving the account of this afterward he said, ‘ of this they could make nothing.’ ”

In other words, “ a government of the people for the people and by the people ” was not within their purview.

When the Declaration was signed and issued to the country as a platform for a new nation, it can hardly be doubted that its doctrines were believed by its authors, and by those who accepted it, to be applicable to every people and to all times, — notwithstanding the recognized fact that unfortunate conditions here regarding African slavery revealed an apparent inconsistency.

How far the words of the Declaration applied to negro slaves will always be disputed, but that Jefferson intended no exception is to be gathered from his oft-quoted expressions, and from the fact that in the original draft the British Government were severely condemned for establishing slavery here and not repressing the slave trade. The historian Bancroft expressed in his history the Jeffersonian view, saying, “ The heart of Thomas Jefferson in writing the Declaration, and of Congress in adopting it, beat for all humanity ; the assertion of right was made for all mankind and all coming generations, without any exception whatever,

for the proposition which admits of exceptions can never be self-evident."

It should be added that at that time, North and South, it was the opinion that slavery would soon disappear, and it was only unforeseen inventions which changed the situation. But taking whatever view we please of the intention of the makers in this regard, there can be no question that the Declaration announced important and high ideals for the future. Jefferson emphasized this when he said, "It is indeed an animating thought that while we are securing the rights of ourselves and our posterity we are pointing out the way to struggling nations who wish like us to emerge from their tyrannies also," and again, "Every man and every body of men on earth possesses the right of self government. They receive it with their being from the hand of nature." And so Charles Sumner later said, "The words that governments derive their just powers from the consent of the governed are sacred words, full of life-giving energy. Not simply national independence was here proclaimed, but also the primal rights of all mankind." Abraham Lincoln said, "In these early days the Declaration of Independence was held sacred by all and thought to include all;" and again, "If that Declaration is not the truth, let us get the Statute book in which we find it and tear it out." These statements have been echoed and re-echoed by all our great statesmen, from Washington and Adams and Jefferson to Webster, Sumner, and Lincoln; they have even been asserted more than once in political platforms of great parties, and wherever the voice of dissent was feebly raised and doubters found, it was until recent times invariably among the apologists for slavery, or among those who feared interference with it, never by the men whom we of the present day look upon as leaders, or whose interpretation we would ever have been willing to follow.

No one assumes that the Signers foresaw all the temptations

and difficulties likely to arise as the nation grew stronger, — that was as impossible as for their wildest dreams to compass its marvellous growth; but they knew full well that the doctrines they asserted would have to meet severe tests and their sublime confidence in the virtue and constancy of the people is the more manifest that they were willing to take the risk of future conditions. If they were wrong in those doctrines, how can we avoid the conclusion that they have been given greater credit for wisdom and foresight than they were justly entitled to, or that the wisdom of all our great statesmen is impugned, who for so many years have asserted and boasted of the truths set forth.

What the Revolutionary statesmen urged upon the people as fundamental truths were endorsed as such for more than a century, yet if they were mere phrases or visionary theories, the eloquence and statesmanship of all the great statesmen before our day or in our day, until within a few years, goes for nought.

Rufus Choate, to be sure, in the stress of a political campaign urging the claims to the Presidency of James Buchanan, termed the Declaration “glittering and sounding generalities of natural right;” but this was looked upon as exuberant rhetoric, and the expression was never taken seriously by the country, nor accepted as a matured opinion in contravention of the main doctrines of the Declaration.

More recently men of standing and character have apparently adopted and even extended Choate’s theory, — it has been maintained that governments rest upon the consent of *some* of the governed, and this is true and not apart from the Declaration if it means that governments rest upon the will of the majority, for that carries with it the right of all to be heard, — but it is absolutely foreign to the Declaration if by “some of the governed” is intended only the more enlightened part of the people, — that is, the minority, — for

then it upholds a theory differing not at all from that of an oligarchy, or even a despotism, and does not represent popular government as we have understood it.

It has been said also that the Declaration applied only to civilized peoples, intelligent enough to maintain Republican government, or to those of sufficient capacity to govern themselves and to better themselves by such self-government, or even farther, that the Declaration is untrue as a general proposition and only applied to the existing situation in America in 1776.

No such qualifying phrases can be found in the Declaration itself, and if such were in the minds of the statesmen of the day it is passing strange that men who had the power to express themselves in so lucid and straightforward a way never hinted then or thereafter at any such limitations.

It certainly was not the view of the Continental Congress when at the end of the war it said, "Let it be remembered that it has ever been the pride and boast of America that the rights for which she contended were the rights of human nature," and the historic glory of the American Revolution is immensely lessened if we accept the Declaration with qualifications, for on such a theory nothing was established by that war except the ability of the Revolutionists, with the aid of France, to bring the rebellion to a successful conclusion, and to establish here a Republic, the Declaration becoming to the rest of the world of academic interest only as a skilfully worded statement of provincial grievances. We all must desire to ascertain if possible whether those who hold the theories I have stated are correct, and whether our predecessors have been cherishing illusory and transitory principles or eternal truths, for if the former are right our compass now points in a new direction, and we may as well change our course to correspond, even though we reach the well-worn track that European nations have been following since we originally steered away from them.

There is a prevalent belief, and with some it accounts for the novelty of recent views, that the Declaration prescribed a Republican form of government as essential for every people, but such is not the fact, as is evident from these words in the document :

“ Whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends (referring to the rights and liberties of the people), it is the right of the people to alter and abolish it, and to constitute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles and *organizing its powers in such form* as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness. Prudence, indeed, will dictate that long-established governments should not be changed for light and transient causes.”

Washington expressed this in brief and cogent form as follows : “ Every nation has a right to establish that form of government under which it conceives it may live most happy.”

The equality before the law asserted in the Declaration never implied equality of intelligence or opportunity, nor did it necessarily imply universal suffrage as a fixed principle. Between 1776, when the Declaration was issued, and 1789, the time of the adoption of the Constitution, there were in the thirteen States various forms of government, and none of them with universal suffrage. A free people may see fit to restrict or enlarge their own rights ; they may confer extreme power upon appointed rulers, or retain all power to themselves, — whichever course is pursued, if it be the people’s unrestricted action, it is in no way inconsistent with the Declaration. Of course this excludes absolutely and forever any idea of a controlling influence by an outside power, or that there can be any such thing as self-government, unless a people are left free to determine for themselves the form and methods of their own government. To those who wrote the Declaration self-government and independence were intercon-

vertible terms, and the burden is upon those who would now distinguish them to invent new definitions. The Declaration did not proclaim that every people in the world were fitted for a Republican form of government, — that form was unquestionably the ideal of the fathers, but the essence of the document was that each nation must determine for itself what form it preferred, and so long as the people were freely consulted, and reserved the right to change when their interests were not properly served, the principles were not infringed upon. This was to be entirely independent of the form adopted; it might be a limited monarchy like England, an armed Republic like France, a Greek, Roman, or South American Republic, a military dictatorship like Mexico, or even a popular despotism like the early days of the Napoleonic empires. The modern idea that fitness was to be determined by some foreign superior nation had not been thought of in 1776.

Take a concrete case like the England of to-day, excluding, of course, her colonies — her ideals may not be the same as ours, but it would be a hazardous statement to make that the rights of the people as set forth in our Declaration are not preserved in England in their full significance quite as well as in our own boss-ridden states and cities. England has a monarchy in form, but a people's monarchy, and subject to the people's will, and it may well be questioned whether the people there do not express their will with quite as much facility as here. In many places in this country we have a practical and vulgar despotism under the forms of a Republic, — the people can and do assert themselves when thoroughly aroused, but they are long suffering, and only when the bossism becomes too flagrant and offensive can they be led to enforce that equality before the law and to exhibit that latent power which is necessary to prove that genuine Republicanism still exists.

In dealing with our Indian tribes the government has proceeded upon the theory that they were nations, they have not been taxed, and although our treatment of them has not been creditable, our theories have been consistent; still, I have no idea that the framers of the Declaration believed that these tribes, or Oriental nations, or any semi-civilized peoples were fitted for a Republic, or that for them such a form would be wise or safe; but they did not lose sight of it as the ultimate for every people, and believed that it could only be attained by every people working out their own salvation and by that governmental evolution which through struggle and hardship alone leads to a higher and more stable form. Secretary Hay once incisively expressed it thus: "No people are fit for anything else than self-government," and it was an eminent Frenchman who truly said, "You cannot have a Republic without Republicans."

Given the capacity to form *some* government and you have all the conditions necessary for improvement, and in the Providence of God a people can better be trusted to improve itself than it can to gain in self-government under the subjection of others.

Applying these principles as our fathers stated them, and as they applied them, unless in the case of slavery, and remembering that their sin in that case, however, much forced by their situation, was atoned for from 1861 to 1865 in blood and treasure, the problems relating to inferior races become greatly simplified, for the "white man's burden" ceases to be war and subjection and becomes a Christian principle in recognizing as the sole right of the stronger his duty to assist and encourage the weaker in the struggle to preserve such government as suits him best and for which he deems himself best fitted.

Abandoning the principles of the Declaration, the white man's burden means to the black or yellow man political slavery and wrong.

Even the Anglo-Saxon, with all his success in many respects, as a colonist, has utterly failed to lead an inferior race up to self-government — he may have carried with him some material advantages, but his assumed and vaunted burden cannot be separated from his love of power and soaring ambition.

His dominating superiority makes him a hard master of another race, and he fails utterly in sympathetic appreciation of racial differences and characteristics.

No one can dispute his marvellous capacity, the forcefulness of his dealings, and in many cases his patient, earnest attempt to better the conditions of those whom he rules ; but he never has accepted nor understood the peculiar natures of his subjects nor enlisted their sympathies or affections. Without intending to be cruel, his cool assumption of the power to remake people and force them into his own mould has led him into errors which have caused great hardship and have ended in estrangement and hatred.

Neither material prosperity nor orderly government wins the hearts or permanently changes the habits of peoples whose traditions have been interfered with and whose imaginative and fickle natures have not been taken into account. A foreign government remains forever foreign to a people whose love has not been gained, and who are made to feel that they are inferior and never to be on terms of full equality with their masters.

No more conspicuous instance can be found than in the condition of India after a century and a half of English rule, much of it by excellent men of great capacity and strength, and of honest intention. It began with the rule of the sword, and to-day it is nothing else, — it has not led the people towards self-government, nor has it succeeded in inspiring confidence and affection, — stripped of the thin veneer of civilization which has been spread over the land, the con-

queror and the conquered still face each other as ever alien and hostile races, the conquered hating their masters, and sullenly biding their time for revolt, and the conqueror holding them down by force and fear only. The gulf between the races is as broad as ever, and everything indicates that a withdrawal of British power would be followed by a temporary return to much the former conditions of semi-barbarism, until something better was evolved by struggle and experience, aided now by the bright example of a neighboring power.

Egypt, which on the surface shows good results, has done little but exchange a Turkish for an English ruler, so far a gain, for it has been followed by an apparent advance in material prosperity and a lightening of the burdens, but it is not easy to ascertain how far the prosperity has really benefited the people; and remembering that Egypt was once the centre of advanced civilization, it is by no means proved that as a free people they would not have been further on the road towards a hopeful self-government.

If we look to the Dutch colonies in Asia, we find at best a condition of peonage and political servitude and a war that has had little cessation in fifty years. There again it is force and fear and not self-government. In German, French, or Russian colonies no one seeks for self-government, and the hopelessness of their situation is that neither fraternization with the people exists nor improvement of conditions by emigration from the ruling countries.

To point the contrast, and to evidence the truth of the principles of the Declaration, we may well consider the rising empire of Japan, inhabited by a people differing but little from the neighboring races, a century ago not far removed from barbarism, pagan in religion, though tolerant, Asiatic in habits and thought, self-governed and independent because it has been left to work out its own problems, yet now by its own energy

advancing towards civilization and Christianity, and rapidly becoming a great power in the East. No stronger exemplification can be found of the principle that a people is better fitted for self-government than any other, and that its own experience and efforts offer better tutelage than the wisest and most beneficent rule of foreign masters.

The plans of statesmen, the ambition of nations may come into conflict with the doctrines of the Declaration, but they are of no concern as compared with the truth or falsity of the principles it contains. If it is not to be followed as a standard of governmental ethics, and is a visionary statement of unpractical theories, we seem somehow to have lost our bearings, and to have parted with our guiding lights. No true American, whatever his party allegiance, can avoid or lightly treat these important questions, nor can the right solution come from a consultation of his interests or prejudices, nor from any source other than the experience of the years since 1776, and a careful consideration of the wisdom or folly of the teachings of those who have made this country what it is. No day can better emphasize these thoughts than this anniversary, and if in avoiding anything of a partisan nature I have willingly laid myself open to the charge of triteness, let us remember that the trite things of this world are often of the most importance, and the more familiar they are, the more apt they are to be disregarded or forgotten. They cannot be foreign to the purposes of this meeting, for although the original parchment of the Declaration at Washington has faded out, the principles of this most important and startling of State Papers will always be living light, and if the day should ever come when it would be unbecoming to discuss them here, one of the great purposes of this Association would have been lost, and the nature of our people and our theory of government changed.

When Daniel Webster with his masterly eloquence evolved

from his imagination the great speech of John Adams upon the Declaration, he could have had in his mind no qualifying phrases, no doubts as to the eternal truths which were proclaimed, and no question but that independence was the ideal for and the right of every nation of the earth ; otherwise his words failed to ring true, and he never could have closed with such statements as these :

“ Read this Declaration at the head of the army, every sword will be drawn from its scabbard and the solemn vow uttered to maintain it or perish on the bed of honor. Publish it from the pulpit, religion will approve it and the love of religious liberty will cling round it, resolved to stand with it or fall with it ; send it to the public halls, — proclaim it there, — let them hear it who first heard the roar of the enemy’s cannon, — let them see it who saw their brothers and their sons fall on the field of Bunker Hill and in the streets of Lexington and Concord, and the very walls will cry out in its support.”

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 011 699 557 8